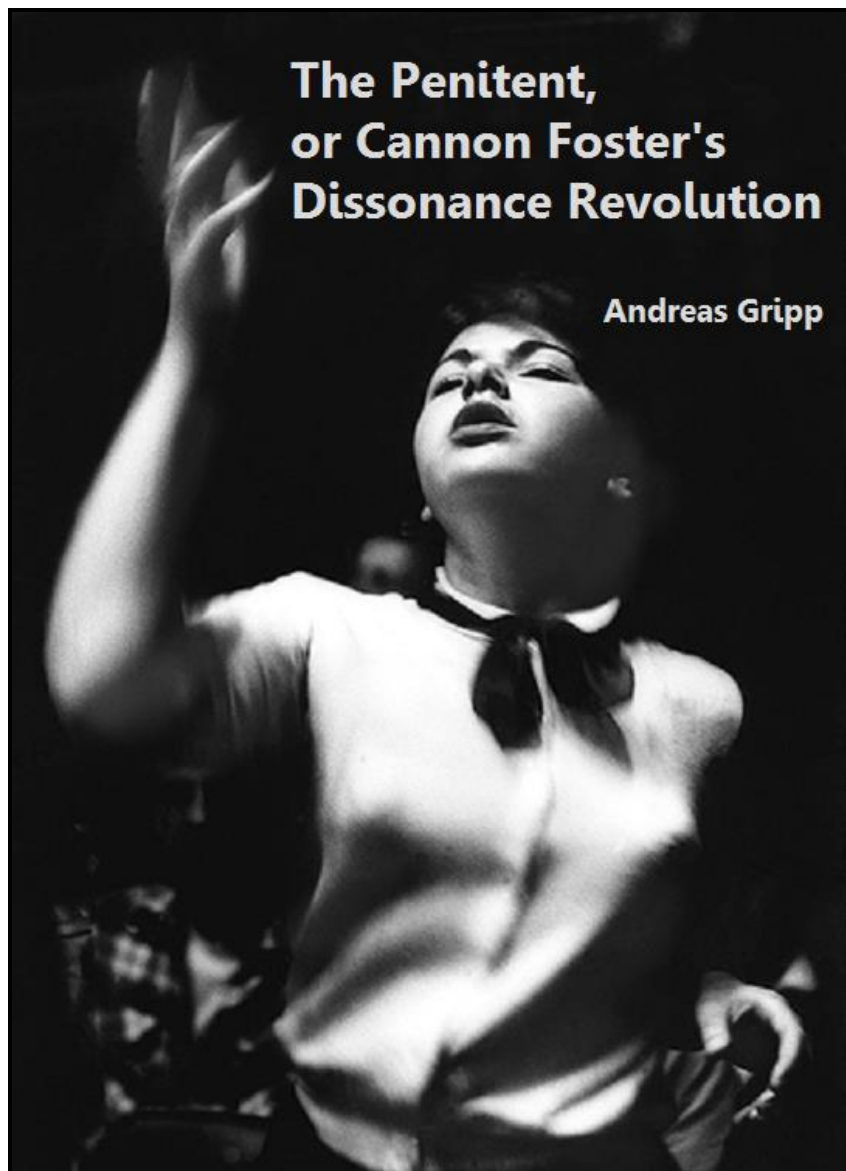


**The Penitent,
or Cannon Foster's
Dissonance Revolution**

Andreas Gripp



[Inside Front Cover]

The Penitent

or Cannon Foster's Dissonance Revolution

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The Penitent

or Cannon Foster's Dissonance Revolution

Andreas Gripp

Beliveau Books

The Penitent, or Cannon Foster's Dissonance Revolution

2nd Edition

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Covenants

The socialists are gonna kill me.
This isn't literal, or it might be,
it depends on how much I've had
in ratio of Tequila to Twitter,
of Instagramming crosses
and Bible paper and red-slashing
their hammer-and-sickle icon
I refuse to march behind
when protesting the bulldozing
of sweat lodges and animal traps
I don't really like anyway—
only because I can't stand
humidity while the metal-mouthed,
teeth-clenched hanger-on of
furry limb (that would flee to liberty
if it only could) is innately cruel,
but then my Indigenous
brothers need to survive too
and who am I to Monday-sermon
them to the point of unfriending
and mute? And the traps aren't made
like that anyway, you say.

Point taken and Unist'ot'en is where
my spirit would stand if I had one

which Hitchens would scream is nonsense
if he were alive and would his ghost
admit he was wrong all along?

I shoved the sacred
tobacco in my glove
when an Anishinabek elder
offered it to me on a cold-as-fuck
afternoon and the tea I just had
failed to do its trick. It was his idea
and I'm ever one to acquiesce.
The sensation wasn't as grating
as expected—much less than the
Ashes of Wednesday that kick off Lent
and I cussed each and every day
after I boasted I'd give up the booze.
Even the Rector regretted his promise.

But I digress—the Soviet emblem
was nowhere to be seen
and I admire the strength of beauty
on the majestic, Mohawk
standard. Never a mascot. Ever.

Self-flagellants of Dutch descent
say fearless Joseph? Misunderstood.

The Pierogi was undercooked
and Stalin's chef, a Bourgeoisie.
If your ravioli-in-a-can
can't Italian, can Crimea
stay Khrushchev's gift?
"Holodomor is an American
Lie" but Ukrainians aren't Jews
so I can't accuse you of
anything. White-on-white isn't
racism and bigotry's a pun
on words.

I tapped along the way
to your exhibit, on Dundas,
'cause "innovation" is how it works
and the King is just a block around
the bender. You say it was meant
for *Pride*, that the mofo had mis-
gendered you, that the poets
are giving you a second chance
even if they barely glance.
Look at them, at the open mic,
how they're crafty
in their beer. My granddad too
wore plaid but his beard
was bottom-trimmed.

He should've gone electric.
The sons of Cossacks
killed him, y'know.

You told me once
you read my zines,
how collage was just a puzzle
high on glue. The horse-race went to
Paradigm, mine rabbit-slept, gun-
shy.

You're surprised I've grown
my hair, that I didn't
exchange the Fedora
for a line
of MAGA hats—
and how could I,
when the orange dotard's Kimchi
is P'yŏngyang-laced?
Elton John was forced to cringe
when *Rocket Man* was named.
Bernie Sanders shared
the credit
but Taupin wrote the tune—
feel the burn of your mis-
taken.

I'll await your wokened grovel,
the "I'm listening"
alit by torch. Apologies
unaccepted by the flash
of mob appeal.
And we thought
Frankenstein had it bad.
The flower-girl,
tossed in the pond
head-first, deleted
like a circumcision's
precision cut.
The director's lovechild
howls to this day. Even
Solomon would've cupped
his ears. Not David's
son but Ginsberg's muse.
It only goes to show
that the straitjacket
was unnecessary. A hairshirt
would've done.

The border guards
are Sergeant Schultz
and the Wall is just a rubble
of Lego blocks,

hidden in the
shags of golden carpet, like landmines
in Vietnam—even the caravans
of Juan Guaidó
won't risk it
just-in-socks.

I'll give them my shoes,
barely scuffed and the boy
who blacks them up
is as blonde as the village-damned.
Look into his eyes—closer.
They're not aglow, you see,
nor Necronomicon demonic.
He's only reflecting sunlight
that shines on the bad
and on the good,
and I wanted to Jesus-quote
to show He's *still* the Son of God,
at least in my bumbled
summation of Truth.

You frothed and foamed
at the jaw
when you read my untimely
interview;

my slandering of academia,
that it's garish bafflegab,
their verse, *spouted*
by Commie demagogues
in cliques. We cold-shouldered
each other for days.

When I creeped your profile
on AssFace, yours
was just as phoney
as the rest—quinoa/greens aplenty,
your obligatory bikini
pics from Cuba
(unless you were in Bayfield
all the while and had *filtered*
the beach to hell),
regurgitating gifs and memes
I've seen a thousand times already.
And. putting. a. period.
after. every. fucking. word. does. not.
make. it. profound.

You asked me if I checked you out,
your steamy summer selfies.
I say that sex with someone you hate
is the most thrilling of all,

that the feigning of love
is a reality deeper
than the secret spaces
of your body—that no, I didn’t look,
or if I did, I didn’t imagine
us together. We’d tear at
each other’s throats
and then pass them off as hickeys.
I have breasts of my own—
what need have I of yours?
But that’s from all the *faggot*
jokes I was forced to hear
in school. Whenever I whipped
off my top, I wondered
if it was true.

I’m in love with my wife.
As enticing as you think you are,
I’d never take the bait. But never
say never (again): we’re Bond-
ed by lust and loathing.
When Belle & Sebastian
called it right, that
you want to be left alone
with Marx & Engels for a while,

I should've paused
before sharing the Gospel—
John's, Matthew's,
or from your favourite, Mao Tse-Tung
(though he'd never confess
the Christ). See, even atheists
bow the knee to some supposed
incarnation. When they placed him
in a state of State,
they might have brushed
his teeth at least. That's why he never
smiled, I tell you. When we think
we're all the same, then who is
beautiful?

Lazarus Duchesne

You've arisen from the bed
after pulling a bloated Beach
Boy for *over* half-a-year
and with finally something to say
to the *entire* dragondom.

But in the subtlety of
sibilants you'll make your
battle known: post-haste,
that depression wasn't laziness
on Xanax. We simply
couldn't cheer you up;
our hearts frozen over
by some ice age diffidence.

You knighted yourself
in the night—
your helmet cracked,
the size of Diatryma's
egg. When knocked off
your Eohippus,
your brains were scrambled
and Darwin's ghost
never accepted you
as his son.

The drawing board
is missing its missing
link. Take the chalk
that's crushed in your pocket
from the Fall. If you etch
the hominin incognito,
it will look like no one else
that came before it
and you'll remain the last
of the line, ever-daring
till the end and nothing said
will be taken
personally.

Your identity depends
on days-of-the-week:
Saturday you're Adam;
a madman on days of rest
and Monday sees you madam,
in stockings fishnet-stretched.
Had you Neeted your legs,
you might have turned us on.
Tuesday watches,
seeing you tell time
and when protagonists
die onscreen—

at every half-price
matinée.

Wednesday you're at their
funeral, with no moment
enamoured as middle.

Your sister's day is Thursday,
ever-older—and aged
like Sauvignon.

3 pm on Friday
is atonement for your sins:
your younger brother's
passing with your jealousy
nailed to trees.

You'd pivot branch-
to-branch if your arms were only
longer, nimble, fists clenched
around crumpled leaves
you refuse to use as clothing.
When I call you in the garden,
your signal's always busy.
Who is it you're speaking to,
naked and nameless
as a babe just out of the womb?

Intelligentsia

If Corso had been sober,
he might've *made* the Norton C.
I say The Beats
beat themselves,
a Robert Frost-
ed mediocrity is better,
and the cake I tried to bake
for One Hundred Ferlinghettis?
Burnt in the Black Forest.

Forest City kingdom
keepers of all things art
and verse
have invalidated me—
I'm just a pan getting flashed,
a fan who's traded teams
twice too often,
my jersey numberless
with the nameplate
brown-on-brown.

The Browning
Bookshop was a playground
of Frisco lit; its basement,
a round-about fire-
trap.

Even earwigs hide away
for fear of embers.
Their inebriated
half-a-dozen
will never add to six,
gallery or not.
It's see and seem to be seen—
there's no need to ask for
substance.

On the day you went
in your wheelchair,
Dadaists flocking drunk,
you had a hole
within your pocket
and the steps weren't worth
the risk. Give your twenty
to the handlers—
they're inhaling Justin's pot,
on the sidewalk just out-
side. They promise
it'll be spent
on a meal. Meatless,
within sixty
miles farmed.

Even the devil's
food
leaves its darkest crumbs
for birds.

See them fly away
before they're shooed,
murmurations
casting warnings
to those below
who've yet to learn.

I talk of plucking rainbows
off their shirts;
that all of the crayon's colours
add to *noir*. Now take
a spectrum's sliver
from the mix.

See? It no longer makes
any sense, their words.

The Lucky Ones

have given up the ghost
if spirits indeed ascend,
and if there isn't a thing as such,
then the sluggish, corporeal erasure
in a padded, subterranean suite
is preferred, despite decay
from a pre-emptive strike—
be it tumour or a bullet's tumult,
or a puzzle's reassembly
when 100 pieces are strewn
between the potholes and puddling ditches
brimming with larvae and their plague.

They are relieved that it's done,
their demise, as horrid as it may have been—
missing out on the fainting of grain,
the colourless coral reef,
a cartographer's re-drawing of shorelines
washed over by runaway thaw,
and the protruding bones
of the living, tallied by children
who ask why we're here.

The Penitent

or Cannon Foster's Dissonance Revolution

Note the reasons that you offer
under our light bulb's scrutiny,
the excuses that you conjure,
that you're no *murderer* of children
or a pouncing, heartless thief.

So you defend yourself
with parables,
make analogies, apologist.

It falls apart in seconds
with your motives and intent,
the clumsiness contrived
like a banana peel of old
or a simple clash of chefs
spilling sushi in desserts,
fish that swam just hours before
fresh-baked in flans
and crumbles.

If I'm around the kitchen door,
sponging hinges with vinaigrette,
know I've summoned witches
from their trance,
to fashion peace with warring factions,

keep *dissent* from mutating,
beating the bird flu at killing us all.

Once, when my wisdom teeth were pulled,
I knew what seeing death was all about.
They counted *back* from 10 to 1,
anesthetics kicking in
by the time they got to four—
and I felt nothing, saw nothing,
knew that *nothing* awaited souls all ripe
and brimming with redemption.

It's much too late for demons
to regain their cloudy place,
their faces still contorted by the fall.
If they trade-in all their pitchforks,
would their fingers pluck on harps?

The done is done already
and the street too set in rock
to allow for U-turns on the road.
There's a patrolman who is watching
with his buzzer on the horn,
waiting to silence the changed-of-mind
with a reckless driving ticket.

Remember Eastwood's comeback
in the raucous *Unforgiven*.
Who predicted Oscars
for his old-man gait and voice?
Even his nameless, faceless stuntman
is eating donuts by the pool.

They'll sculpt your many failings
on the sunny estuary,
next to madmen selling tickets to the ball.
If you can, come in costume
as Rodin,
say Camille is on her way,
seducing the *Sheriff*
who pulled her over,
driving fifteen over fifty
with curdled cognac in her cup—
her bewitching breasts exposed
to offer payment for the fines.

And at last when no one's watching,
when they're bowing their heads in prayer,
smash their graven image
with a hammer from the shed.

Tell them it was an accident,
an earthquake,
an Act of God as clemency;
to reconcile, easier
the second time around,
supporting substitution
and Word becoming Flesh,
dispensing lambs that bleat and bleed
seventy, seventy,
seven times seventy.

Dr. Lerner's Study Notes

or The Treatise of Cameron King

You called it a manifesto—
but I was able to see
right through it,
a declaration
of your intent
to make our bitter world much better—
but how could all this be
with only *you* left at the helm?

You rage against society
with all the right clichés:
Blast the banks and corporate whores
and the cops are on the take.
Now tell us something new,
please will you?

Or must we hear it all again
before you turn and go away:
X is god—it can't be trusted;
God is dead and Musk, a fraud,
and Bin Laden got his money
from the Church and CIA.

The New York Times, a pack of lies
and CNN the same

and tell us something new now,
would you?

Smoking gives you cancer,
and every quarter pounder, chicken wing,
a crime against the earth
and the blood of all the cows and pigs
accuse us in the name of Job
and will you *tell us* something new?

Let Leviathan now speak
and Jehovah entertain,
this test of sorts has done away
with all complacency,
a roll of weed the harbinger
of something simply greater,
the clowns who frown
at circus time are ripe
with social change.

Look, the Apple tree knows better
and Microsoft's the prophet
of the hip and modern day.

We need no sport to thrill the crowd,
the Bible tells us so!

Let us dance. Let us dance
to wind-whipped leaves
and cherry pies
that drop from clouds and pour
from skies with kites.

Nagasaki
was the über
2nd coming, the number 2 banana
and it burns you to the bone
to see the one you love
score *last* and out of first.

Let the children cut the ribbon
and the mayor ring out for cake:

Hear ye! Hear ye!
It's the orange juice on time
that keeps the sentences
in place,
the seeds and pulp both censored,
the peel without a trace.

"We've only just begun,"
you hum in altered states,
"to shine ..."

Where is our nearest fantasy?
Your Waldenesque Utopia
that follows Krishna's flute?
Your 8-ball in the corner
won the trophy and the game
but the ladies didn't care
and that festers in your mind.

"I'm a Communist! I'm a Stalinist!
I'm a soldier in the ranks of
Kim Jong Un!"

You're an empty, blind-guide Pharisee—
Howard Stern, your maître d'.

Your scribbles
have just been published
by the Black House Book of War
and you think that Knopf and Norton
will be drooling *jealously*.

"I'll tell you something new,
what you've never heard before!"

I liked your parroting
of truth a whole lot better,
only because deep down inside
the rest of us thought you sane,
knew that you were right
and though the words you echoed
had damned us all,
we wish we hadn't chuckled.

You swing from vines
and look for Jane,
or Eve when stars come out,

the firmament
now clear of pies
and Yahweh's court, adjourned.
Job has found his daughters
and the Devil, welcomed back—
in the parlour, near the kitchen,
reading E.A. Poe by candlelight
with Jesus by his side.
All is well with love and hate
and killing is no more.

See, you found a way to tell us,
to share your new-found faith;

the oracles of guidance
wrapped around your scrawny neck:

in the guise of quartz and rubies,
the eyes that see past life and death
and shout that you're our Adam—

that let you sit 'neath orchard trees
and taste the fruit that falls,
without temptation,
without the curse,
its sugar juice
runs out your lips
and no one calls you mad.

Academia

Forgive the mathematics
of my obsolescent mind,
it was a character flaw
that brought me,
deliberately drunk
and callously crashing
your Cambridge convocation.

For I'm denied my Ivy tenure,
padded *chairs* at Brown, Cornell—
where talk of factitious fractals
haughtily hobnobs
with the snobs.

Jealousy, jealousy,
I'm sprouting green
with jealousy!
Their lectures rise
as freeway fumes
and the Earth feels hotter
by the hour!

Doctor Proctor,
in clearing perimeters of mites,
there's none to feed on the dust
your brittle bones will leave behind.

Please give me a gallon of water,
sour grapes need washing down.

If it's cards your hands are clutching
then trade your *cloven*
heart for a spade.
I'll raise your petty, paltry King
with a double face
and peasant flush.

Grant me chips
to cash on site
and a girl
who thinks I'm cute.

I'll gladly lose my liver
to the cellars
of Vaduz,
some vintage wine
from Liechtenstein,
a nation never noted
on the map.

And should a substitute
suffice,

make it a *keg*
of Russian rum
from the States
of Rasputin,

who wipe their soles
on Stalin's soul,
swipe their sickles
spitefully.

I repudiate
Pravda's penchant
for preserving
propaganda!

With my papers
licked by flames,
you say my thesis
is at an end,
I'll be lacking
archival status,
and *Emeritus*
will still elude me
with every curtsy
to the peers.

My dear Professor Proud,
Holocene isn't Recent,
it's old and out-of-touch,
its fossils
simply sediment
in the sand.

When I declare my revolution,
that the speed of sound's a figment
of the men who nibble figs,
I'm scorned to shame and stain—
my *deriding* of Derrida
the caustic cause
of condescension.

For it's a case of clumsy timing
since you all prefer perfection:

my missing
of the wobble
tossing *calendars*
aside,
3 one-millionths
of a second,

due to quakes
in ocean floors
that rock the Earth,

my counting
all askew,
mea culpa calculations
in Calcutta,

believing they'd be published
in the *Science Michigan*,
by my friend
who sleeps with *both*
the editors,

unaware
of supplantation,
by cartoons
that make much *fun*
of physicists.

Yes I never should have ventured
to the bar of quashing quaffs,
at the caucus
across
from Windsor,

being adroitly
hoity-toity
in Detroit.

Take me out to the city square
and disrobe me of my ranking!

Then, at 1:03 pm,
when I'm *reciting*
my residency,
teaching ESL to women
on a cruise ship near Peru,

scream it *isn't* worth a thing,
that my Spanish is out-of-date,
"Señorita" just as sexist
as my search for bigger breasts,

my poker face exposed;
that I'll settle in Seattle,
near trees of Ever-
green,

every treatise that I offer
falling on deafer,
blinder ears.

Ronald McDonald's End of the World Special

Let us plot the earth's demise
on points of want and plenty:

the convex lines of latitude
rust out in Asian fields
and Marconi's waves run rampant
in propaganda's
glass test tubes.

I'll keep the *Maoan* creed of formula
within my red raincoat
and you'll never know what hit you
when the flash is white and calm.

They sung off-key in quatrain
when the clouds began to fall
and we never knew that fog
had been so *clear* and full of whispers:

*Peace and still
will fill your minds
the day you've stopped your sleeping.*

I didn't know the Buddha's words
till you sat and wrote in sand;

thinking adultery
had come and gone when Christ
had said “no stones.”

A boy in Nova Scotia
throws a fish back in the sea
and his father smacks him
on the head
for compassion’s clemency.

My sister, you’ve lost the pearls
and vineyard
and three starlings broke the phone.
Now no one talks and drinks
with you and the house
is set aflame.

I wasn’t really there
when the earth began to quake;
my eyes were shielded
from the light
that China chose to give.

Children of the atom!
George’s underwear

was showing when he signed
the peace accord,
Texas Rangers finished first
but brother Jeb
had fixed the game.

Mother India,
how you bathe in Ganges' beds
yet break the blocks of Jinn and Jain,
your words of peace were spores
to change our violent, brutal world
and Farmer Billy pulled the bulbs
for Walmart's millionth parking lot.

Test the theory that you have
on Pakistani mosques and blooms:
Kashmir will be a desert
when the snows all melt
and grey.

We should have listened to the birds
before we shot and buried them;
they see our soul
from high above,
had the cure
for all our folly:

*Fly in numbers
where it's warm,
build your nests
in trees that flower;
be content with sun and rain
and let the wings and wind,
seeds carry.*

A Conspiracy Theorist Challenges His Fuck Buddy to Another Round of “Name That Tune”

You and I are legally drunk and maybe one of us thought the other sober or at least faking intoxication, and when you said that Bilderberg had died of asphyxiation, I questioned your sanity and had the right to do that, not that you could challenge any supposition offered to the contrary and if my bicycle helmet is worn indoors, what is that to you?

Make pearls in your hands out of socks. I'll scrunch them into balls and we'll paint them with liquid paper, larger and softer than life but far less cruel to the clams and what's left of our environment.

When Kyoto was denied, you predicted rainfall in Nairobi streets, said sea urchins would simply cab-it downtown. I countered with a scenario of my own accord, how jackhammers would be used in a Tchaikovsky suite and bassoons to build bridges in New York. The Port Authority prophesied the Freedom Tower would stand, as a shell at least and Silverstein's no longer pissed. It's funny that his 99-year lease isn't weighted down by lawyers suing architects for fraud.

My fingernails are stained with the scent of lemon.
You told me not to peel them, merely slice and let
the drops fill your cup. I should have listened but
went my own shit-for-brains way, drinking the
seeds along with the brine. When you see me
next, I'll be on street corners doing jitterbugs
with the cement men on Greenwich Street—
they have nothing better to do
since 1,776 feet of steel is already done and its
siblings are only fraternal.

Show me a field at one with its green. Leave the
rocks where they are and don't let the dog stop
and piss along its borders. If you lift a twig from an
ant hill, offer peanuts as recompense. I heard it's
the oil they want. Watch them, the next time
they invade your cupboards. Isn't that an army
toiling diligently, raising discarded crumbs upon
their backs, marching single-file across your floor
like Yankee soldiers on Methadone, tuned to their
leader's speech and his solo on slide guitar?

It's Dylan you're tapping your foot to.
Not Thomas, our wasted poet of yesteryear,
but Zimmerman, before he found and lost
the Messiah, singing lay lady lay across my
big brass bed.

A New Believer Justifies His Presence **at *la Brasserie du Frontenac***

Your conversion
wasn't the cause of conversation,
I was never in the mood
to debate,
to analyze atrocities
by *the People of the Book*.

Let us say our alphabet
is in *need* of subtle change,
an extra letter, an inverted B,
that something needs to be done
with every O
that looks like zero.

You *swear* to fight obscenity
wearing slippers made of wool,
announce that sheep
are standing with you,
that the Lamb of God's the star,
you're only *receiving*
belated thank-yous
for His Sermon on the Mount.

When you'd said you were ungodly,
an atheist *without* doubt,

they christened you in Paris
as the *éminence grise*,
teaching doctrine
without a crown or chic degree.

They said you *spoke* with blatant madness:
“Devour soup in such a way
that makes no *use* of silver spoons,
use a straw in front of mother,
a *fork* if all the patrons
are filthy rich.”

Adding it's not to cause offense,
to appear so peasant-class,
but that the consommé
is thicker than it looks,
and if someone has a sense
of Eastern balance,
a single *drop* will never spill
upon the floor.

Tell the diners that to tip
is condescending,
that the waiter has no need
for alms or mites,

that C.S. Lewis
is still among them,
his refutations heard
in every *one* of your awkward slurps,
that Screwtape was your father,
you're disinherited
from his will,

that the crucifix you clutch
isn't a blanket or a crutch
but a revision of letter *t*,
since preceding *s*
is so reviled,
the one that we all blame
for being banished
from belief,

and remaking
never ridding us
of sin,
a serpent's soul
to lurk *elsewhere*,
in the innocence
of *A* and all beginnings.

Francisco Cavalier

i

Free-form your way next
to stairwells, push the prize
cart you wish you'd won
and earn a trinket
for a sage and his ad
vice.

Very well. You're stoned again
and you say this really *is*
your final lyric,
that there's nothing left
to sing about

and at least your cake's
not left in the rain,
like the farcical Richard
Harris song
from May of '68.

She sold her vinyl albums,
lip-*syncing* to Troy
Bannister,
and even he knows
Esmerelda's *Spotify*
is a sellout.
And we're all so disappointed.

The Coven has yet to meet—
at Equinox, she'll play *standing*
on her head. The harp that
no one wanted.
Troy, cast away your moniker,
the edge of night has passed.
Make a record without reverb
and throw your cowbell
to the wind.

iii

Bring me sherbet. Bring me wine
made by the neighbour's dad
who has no taste at all. If it suits
you fine, I too will draw a picture
of his wife watering flowers in the nude.

Can we get this over with?
This scrawl you've said
is your very *grand finale*—
or maybe you'll scribe
more couplets,
about space & time
& trees of ghostly green,

maybe *Cosmic Trend*
will condescend, accept
it as your epitaph, your *P.S.*
to the bitterness of living,
the business of scripting *see*,
I can write as good
as middling you,
mailing your friends
with the date of
missile launch.

It's all about *them*
when your pen
turns desert-dry.

And then there's vodka
in the *last* of your canteens.
It was for all the beasts *alive*
that are crawling
in dystopia.
The maggots.

v

You built a bird
house for the *flies*,
for they as well
were worthy
of an *abode*,
sheltered
and palatial,

saying their genus
was the work
of *genius*,
the greatest
of all in flight,

the gods of shit
and death
who kiss the worst
that we can offer.

Close your eyes tightly,
for all of us.
Pray for the happy endings
we deserve: me, Esmerelda,
Troy Bannister, Richard Harris,
the neighbour's dad and wife,
and your own nom de plume,
Francisco Cavalier,
surname pitched in French.

Dream that we can sing, we can write,
draw and have sex whenever we
desire. That our grapes don't sour
in the vineyard of our minds.
That our use of the term
motherfucker
is mere hyperbole.

Or be Frank one last time
and tell it like it is.
Say your damnation
to bargain bins
is simple vengeance
from some Deity,

undecided on
karma or hell.

If we'd actually read
your book,
we never would have
left it for the *thrifters*—
those too cheap
to pay the sticker
price.

You rested on the
seventh—like the father
you *emulate*,
resigned that he's the
winner—no matter
how much you loathe him.

That he abandoned
you in the crib,
with your dreams
in *infancy*,

like the one
you re-do *creation*,
make nothing
that sheds its
blood,
write poems
that make us swoon
with just a
soother in your mouth,
a rattle in your
hand the sound of
fire.

Dropping Acid

or Oliver's Awakening at Lee-Anne's Potluck

No, that isn't how it happened,
you tell me, pouring our drinks
beside the fire. It wasn't the
hit-while-riding-the-bicycle thing at all,
that's yet another unfound rumour.

We toast to mental health
and you give the proper setting,
the moment when he snapped, your friend,
and how that actually made him smarter:

Wesley reciting the Beats,
simmering Borscht
a percussive accompaniment,
Jenny Chang on the violin,
lamenting war's not dead,
it never dies, and all of our talk—
simply that.

Pick a Preston lilac
and say you haven't killed.
Boil eggs at Easter
and persuade that peace prevails.

Call the five-and-dime tout de suite
and cancel your reservation.
There's work to be done.

Give the postman "return to sender"
and throw your bills away.
Tell the boss to fuck himself
and the suits to shove it twice.
Grow your hair down to your feet
and trip on the stairs to the church.

Tell the children of God
that you love the witch and homosexual,
that Esau got a raw deal,
that Thomas was a gullible skeptic,
that it's OK to admit to errancy,
that teaching their kids to kiss the trees
isn't idolatry,
turning princes to frogs not so bad
when we consider the weight
of crowns,
of gold and of thorns.

gaslit

rubber-room reservation
crooked strait-
jacket bracketed
in pining opinions
on opiate overdose
you'd driven me to
in recesses without a bell

and the pal in principal
never showed in
detention détente
and the cold war just started
to build its berlin wall

you were hammered
in the hammer
when hamilton lost its smog
and the steel was stolen
so stealthfully

the stole was fake and the mink
still has its fur—
even your steak has a stake
in its future—

see the bean curd
curdle on the plate
it mirrored meat but never was
it's the only thing you ever pitied

El Delirio

The majorette,
the woman with the white baton,
is a theosophist at best,
and in your Druid's vision
she's a seasoned, stewing priest.
Keep the tuba player checked
and you will win a portly visit.

Take the temperatures of roosters
and *freeze* the chickens' eggs.
There now,
the disease and its threat are over,
you can summon the waiting waiter
for your cheque
(it'll surely be on the house
for you're a red-caped hero now).

Didn't I warn
that the papers plunder,
rape your brain cells
for new ideas?
Look at all the busy-bodies
who spread the gossip fast:
there's a fire in your tire
and the hubcap keeps on spinning.

You were told to get it fixed,
to give some chakras
to your mechanic
for speeding off
before you'd paid.

Just leave the bill of lading,
toss plug nickels as a tip.

When I saw you on the sidewalk,
tripping like a hippie
on dope,
I prayed it was generic,
that the effects were temporary,
that you've an insightful,
not a blundering, mind.

Use a schoolgirl's abacus
and count from six to ten.
Leave only the middle
uncorrupted
and you'll ace the "crazy eights."
Your aunt might thrive at Tarot decks
but she's a cheat at "twenty-one."

If you take out all your earnings,
your chips of IOUs,
you'll have more than enough
for repair.

When you taxi back to Boston,
they'll have your 4x4 on blocks;
the mobsters shearing bumpers
for the plastic.

Settle at once the difference,
leave a dime for each penny piece,
then take the scooter that they offer
plus the stickered-helmet too,
and ride away in the rain.

I'll cover your cheesy alibi,
say you never meant to pilfer,
say the daring child's your daughter,
that she simply loves quaint math,
that a decal reading "Castro"
was for your aging engine oil,
the tailpipe puffing smoke
and the girl who's strapped behind you
merely mimicking a cigarette.

Watch her clinging dearly
to your “Fonzie” leather jacket
as her free hand waves goodbye.

I’ll think you’re
off to find her mother,
flag-down
marching bands on Main,
ask her sign
when you see her,
and if she’ll mini-bike with you.

Let the anthem
draw to a close
before you whisk her off her feet;
you can trade for a Potts jalopy,
drive your adopted family
to the stars.

The Cosmopolitan Day of Reckoning

Father died a year ago
and already you've carved him bronze.

It's all art deco
in '30s mode
with no buildings left
to crumble.

Look at what they did to you
the blessed, opening night:

their laughter and their leers
brought the entire house *down*
and you said it wasn't comedy.

I know your pain, really I do,
look behind you and you'll see:
splats of paint on dead man's row
that hark the angel's song:

"War on earth,
bad will to all
and to all a bloody night!"

They took me away, they did,
in irons and in chains,

as if I'd been a criminal.

Tell me, Simple Simon,
what's the cause of love's neglect
when you're really needing wanting?
You 1-900
till dawn's light calls
and your bill's been trashed again.

Take you away, they will,
to locks and keys and cushioned rooms
where no one visits you.

I have *been* there, they will say,
with a pouting pair of lips,
tongues and eyes protruding.
It's not their business, we'll respond,
that you're damn well even there,
in the hospice filled with grace.

I've been but once and then in spirit
with the guard dog lost in trust—
he barks and bites on their demand
and we've never posed a threat.

Let the cameras latch on trees
and snap a hurried roll of film:

this will prove me right and just
and yes I'll state that I'm in sin
but truth is always set in gold
and folly.

Peridol was your reward
and you never got the grant—
I'll join you now for lunch and drink
and we'll reminisce and jest:
that the statue truly sucked
and that his head was cracked
and splitting;
the limbs were out of joint
and yes his clothing, ripped and shorn
(drinking on the job does that you know).

You've paid your dues
and done your time,
a second year has passed:
you're better now, I stop and say
as though I'm some authority
on *what* is sane and worthy.

We'll take a walk, we will,
to the dumpster where it lays,
a stone's throw from the grave
located *next* to by-and-by's:

a garbage bag, a coffin,
bird shit left unchecked,
a brandy bottle next to it
not meant to toss away,
still rank with stench
of drunkenness—
you hate him
even more
even now.

Opening Gala for Daniel Kotter, Artist-in-Residence

Your dirty sock
flunked you out of school
and that set you on your way
(your classmates painted apples
and got 10 A's and B's and C's).

We signed "we love you" in ASL
but wouldn't call on teletype.
You sighed in corners
while we danced,
a token flower
pressed on walls.

I saw you five years later,
got your website from a card.
Your portfolio:
a pack of smokes—
you cough your days away.

Put a lampshade in your freezer,
call it *je ne sais quoi*.
Sketch the neighbour raking snowflakes
with a pool cue and a spade.

Snatch the *peaches* on the terrace
and the mound of trash and tin.
It's not too loud on small deaf ears
or eyes that see pure gold.

The gallery was closed by 3
and no one stopped to gawk.
You stood so still in nakedness:
breath caught on windows,
faced that flushed with shame;
none to come and cover.

Why Katherine Failed Medieval Lit

*Trade three for twelve
and when will braids
be fit for tangles?*

I caught you smoking
by classroom doors
and they said the pot was bad.
Now there's two of you
who sit and ponder?

*Take a lesson from English thieves
who pick their pillage wisely:
The poor, to whom you gave,
sing constant, cleansing chorus
and the maids all cupped their ears.*

*Robin, your wealthy uncle
did not die
and cardinals gave them back—
the coins all meant for feeding.
The rich disdain you so
and your poems are truly worthless.*

I read your lines and smiled:

Dear Kate, I'd give a "C"
if it made any sense,
a dollar if it rhymed,
and a kiss to send you
on your merry way,
books in hand,
flowers pink and blooming.

I took it home
and read again.

When held to
mirrors,
it speaks of love,
not stealing.

The London Not-So-Open

The chair had called
your groundstroke wide
and not within
the baseline; you figured
the painter should just slow down—
her gyrating-in-the-stands,
anything but art *cérébral*.

It's clear you don't fit in—
calling the kudos
at the book launch
a puerile kiss-ass fest.
Even the poet's workshop
is 300 bucks too much,
and her banality's yet to be moving.

That isn't where you erred,
when you said they're running rackets
within a club, that the netting
was lacking holes
and every rhyme was out-of-bounds.

Appeal if you will,
to the partisan ump-
ire, say all the proper words
at the *tray* of free hors d'oeuvres;

even buy up
all the chapbooks
at the anarchist indie fair.

Drop this point and game and set
and *watch* their match ignite.
Volley *glares* with plastic smiles—
so feigned and fakely forged
that even Osteen's
forced to cringe.

And don't take it
personally—it's just your work
is so *jejune*, forcing cadence
on them all.

There's no *need*
to sulk in corners, on the clay
of Roland-Garros, with the ball-
boy fetching scraps.

He's wise enough to tell you
that you shouldn't scribe of love.

Look at the board of score.
It's not even worth a number.

A Flash of Sixty Seconds

While you wait for her to show,
at the café, at 3 o'clock,
take an *annotation*
on your failure—
to find some *happiness*—
your smaller-than-average
salary
and your *inability*
to wed.

Contemplate a latté
and I'll fill in all the blanks—
you had a *chance*
slip through your fingers,
trickle down cracks,
tickle your whimsy,
as your dazed and brazen nature
chased her off
(and you
to a drinking binge).

Lunch is costly here
but don't try to bus it
somewhere cheaper—
you won't get off that easily,
be secure and rest assured.

You made your stand
at Christmas time
and she hated teddy bears.

Compound your errors
five times fast,
use “love” in desperation.
I’ll walk you home
in memory—
you cried that night in darkness
and no one knew quite why.

Why do *carousels* spin empty,
with no one riding them?
You have the park
all to yourself,
while couples are all at home,

fucking,
no—making *love*,
kids out back
in the pool
(and you’re even afraid
to do something fun
like simply getting wet).

Walt Whitman: please take note!
You'd be *obscure*
as a pseudonym
in San Fran's *City Lights*,
the beatniks rip you off,
and NYC has little space
'neath naked metal spires.

Don't change the subject,
not quite yet.

The book you bought
on Central Ave.,
from Mandala's Mystic Shop,
was your chance to get it right:
but why pull a *carpe diem*
or another quick cliché
when you're *entranced*
in misery?

You didn't meditate,
offer mantras,
they scared you off,

now the change keeps coming in—
nickels, dimes,
quarters of stupid words
you'd said, tossed back
at your dodging head,
like coinage plopped
in beggars' hats,
enough for cigarettes.

At 3 o'clock you think she'll show.
While we wait, remember how
indecisiveness
cut the new girl's racing heart?
Why did you sleep?
Why didn't you wake,
like the Bodhisattvas urged?
Tell her there and then
that she was beautiful?

You're dredging grinds from your cup, I see,
your journal filled with
words.
Don't tell me—let me guess—
another *pinning* piece
of poetry
meant to melt the girl's iced heart?

It's funny, she's not the one
you're waiting for
yet your eyes still scan
for her.

Allen Ginsberg: grant me peace!
You died in Gautama's arms
and generations quote your thoughts.
Why don't you mimic
his example,
make your enemies your friends?

Lex Luther, Superman.
Martin Luther, John Paul too.
Chapman, Lennon. Nixon, Lenin.
Even Yusuf's at peace
with the Cat.

Write me whenever you can.
Let me *know* how your stanzas go—
maybe *someday* they'll publish you.
And about the girl, three's a crowd,
and I'll never dare to divvy
any *more* of your mistakes—

not yours, or the world's.
It's not conducive
to the *coffee* shared,
the slits of sun
that peek from curtained sky,
the jazz that bops above you
and she'll be here any minute,
not the one
you slyly write of
but the one you're waiting for,

so lonely,
so full of remorse,
it sends me off in steps of haste
and you to further lines, guilty
verse, just *past*
the chimes of 3,

like drops of blood from a cross
you'll accept
no forgiveness from.

The Colour of Jazz

The Trane provides me
a view above the asphalt
and the fault that splits
below white and yellow lines

One-way signs of
demarcation
do not dissuade the cracks,
from their jagged-tooth
borders and thyme,
edging shoulders sleeved
in green

Camouflaged soldiers
and the leaves of their tea
a jasmine laced with coke

Teaching the world to sing,
I'll join in $\frac{3}{4}$ railing
along the byway to terminus,
regardless of trump-
et melody
and the solemnity
of anthemic poems

You fade, in '67's
summertime fling,
only days before
Detroit, sex and sax
Supreme amid the flames

Impulsive Blue Notes holding
in the infernal unfurling of flags,
half-massed in the hell of Hanoi,
their fraying cloth of
half-a-hundred stars,
bars of red that bleed
into their sky



Andreas Gripp is the author of numerous books of poetry, as well as one of short fiction and one of photography. He is the Director of *Black Mallard Poetry* and lives in London, Ontario, with his wife, Carrie.

[Inside Back Cover]



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